



Zion National Park Fire Management



Public Allowed To Gather Free Firewood From Fuel Reduction Project

Zion National Park's Fire Management Program recently introduced an innovative way to reduce some of its excessive wood left over from a fuel reduction project. Taking the lead from other land management agencies that have used this method in the past, park management decided to allow the public to gather the fuel as firewood under a permit system. Instead of burning the excess fuel in piles the wood will now be utilized as a heating source for some local citizens.

The excessive fuel was the result of a 45-acre, multi-phase, hazard fuel reduction project started in 2004 at Lava Point, located in the northern portion of the park. The primary goal of the project was to protect park infrastructure and surrounding private property in the event of a wildland fire through reduction of heavy fuels, particularly dense, overgrown stands of white fir. Subsequently, the reduction of these fuels will stimulate the reestablishment of aspen which have historically dominated the area. Return visitors to Lava Point will notice a much more open landscape than they have in the past. The long term results from the hazard fuel reduction project will bring the forest structure back to a more natural state where wildland fire will be easier to control and thus reduce the risks to park and surrounding private resources.

Park personnel were on site at Lava Point at all times during the two week collection period to issue free permits and give direction and assistance to firewood permittees. The permittees were required to have the permit in their possession while gathering and transporting the firewood. The firewood was pre-cut to manageable lengths by fire personnel and stacked as near to the road as possible which eliminated the necessity for chainsaw use or off-road driving to collect firewood. Collection of up to four cords of firewood was allowed for personal use only. The remaining debris from the firewood collection area will be piled and burned on site by Zion fire management personnel this winter when weather and safe burning conditions allow.

During the program the park gave away approximately 220 cords of wood to over 80 permittees. In fact, the demand for the firewood was so high that the program had to be suspended prior to the projected end date due to a lack of easily accessible firewood.

This project ended up being a win-win for Zion National Park, and the public. Zion was able to eliminate a large amount of excessive fuel from the park and the public benefited from collection of the fuel as firewood. Hopefully the park can build on the success of the program by being able to provide the public more firewood in the future from planned fuel reduction projects

